

State of the Air 2026 Report

Michigan and Wisconsin Findings

Based on the *State of the Air 2026* report by the American Lung Association



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Introduction

The 2026 State of the Air report released by the American Lung Association (ALA) states that 44% of Americans are living in areas with failing grades for air quality, including unhealthy levels of ozone or particle pollution. Air quality data are collected from monitoring sites nationwide, by federal, state, local, and Tribal agencies. The ALA uses this data to assess pollution levels and assign grades based on the number and severity of days when air quality is unhealthy. This report is a collection of data from 2022 to 2024, and like previous reports, found that communities of color are disproportionately impacted by the burden of living with unhealthy air, and are more likely to be suffering from a chronic condition that increases their vulnerability to air pollution.

In this year's report, Michigan saw an overall improvement in ozone, while Wisconsin saw declines in air quality. Nevertheless, both states have many counties receiving failing grades. Detroit and Milwaukee stood out as two of the most impacted metro areas in the Midwest, both facing significant challenges with ozone and particle pollution.

Michigan and Wisconsin

Wisconsin experienced worsened air quality in the 2026 State of the Air report, which reflects broader national trends tied to wildfires in recent years, heat, and other climate-related factors. Counties in both states received failing grades for ozone pollution, short-term particle pollution (24-hour PM_{2.5}), and in some cases, annual particle pollution.





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Air Quality Grades

The 2026 State of the Air report assigns grades using the Air Quality Index (AQI), which classifies air pollution levels by color. Orange days are “unhealthy for sensitive groups,” including children, older adults, and people with asthma or heart disease. Red days are “unhealthy” for everyone, and purple days are “very unhealthy,” where the health risk extends to the general population. The more days a county has in these categories, the worse its grade.

Wisconsin Air Quality Grades

Multiple counties across Wisconsin received poor air quality grades for ozone and short-term particle pollution. Southeastern counties like Milwaukee, Waukesha, Racine, and Ozaukee were among the lowest, each earning failing grades in all three categories of ozone, 24-hour PM_{2.5}, and annual PM_{2.5}. Milwaukee County had 22 orange and 2 red ozone days, earning an F with an average of 8.3. It also failed for particle pollution with several unhealthy days. However, it passed for annual particle pollution with a PM_{2.5} value of 8.4 µg/m³, below the standard of the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA). Waukesha County recorded 19 orange days for ozone resulting in a failing grade, and passed for annual particle pollution with a PM_{2.5} value of 8.1 µg/m³. Racine, Sheboygan, and Walworth Counties also earned F grades due to elevated levels of short-term particle pollution, including multiple red air quality days, as well as a purple air quality day for Sheboygan.

While some areas received moderate C grades, such as Fond du Lac county improving from last year’s F grade; the overall trend reflects a decline in air quality across the state, especially in urban and industrial regions. Much of this worsening is linked to climate-driven wildfire smoke and higher temperatures, which amplify both ozone formation and particle pollution levels. Other counties such as Jefferson, Rock, and Dane also received failing grades, showing that poor air quality is not limited to the southeastern region of Wisconsin. Even mid-sized and rural counties like Eau Claire and Brown experienced multiple days of unhealthy air. Although a few counties lacked complete data or received passing grades for annual particle pollution, the majority of reporting counties did not meet air quality standards. Overall, Wisconsin’s air pollution trends mirror national concerns: more intense wildfire seasons, higher temperatures, and stagnant air events are making it harder to breathe, especially for vulnerable populations.



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Milwaukee, WI

Milwaukee ranked as one of the most polluted areas in Wisconsin in the 2026 State of the Air report, earning failing grades for ozone, short-term particle pollution, and annual particle pollution. The county reported 22 orange and 2 red ozone days, resulting in an F grade with an average of 8.3. For particle pollution, Milwaukee has 6 orange, 1 red, and 2 purple days, reflecting severe short-term spikes that also led to an F grade. The county's annual PM_{2.5} average of 8.4 μm^3 is an improvement from last year's report, resulting in a passing grade for year-round pollution.

Milwaukee's air quality crisis disproportionately impacts its large at-risk population. Of the city's 924,740 residents, about 214,000 are children under 18, and over 142,000 are adults over 65. The city has 13,326 children with asthma, 81,573 adults with asthma, 43,116 people with COPD, and nearly 11,000 pregnancies at risk each year. Milwaukee's population is also majority people of color, with 481,988 residents identified as people of color, and 153,720 residents living in poverty. These overlapping health and social vulnerabilities mean that Milwaukee's poor air quality continues to fuel environmental health disparities, increasing the burden of respiratory and cardiovascular illnesses on its most vulnerable communities.





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Michigan Air Quality Grades

Multiple counties across Michigan received poor air quality grades for ozone and short-term particulate pollution. Counties along the western lakeshore such as Muskegon and Allegan were among the worst, each earning failing grades in ozone, 24-hour PM_{2.5}, and annual PM_{2.5}. Muskegon County recorded 20 orange and 2 red ozone days, earning an F with a weighted average of 7.7. Allegan County also reported 18 orange and 3 red ozone days, resulting in an F. Wayne County, which includes Detroit, had 19 orange and 1 red ozone day, and struggled even more with particle pollution, with 20 orange, 4 red, and 1 purple PM_{2.5} days and an annual PM_{2.5} level of 12.3 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$, well above the EPA standard, leading to failing grades across the board. Other counties including Kent, St. Clair, Berrien, Oakland, and Macomb also earned F grades for ozone, with multiple counties failing for short-term particle pollution and some exceeding annual PM_{2.5} limits. While a few counties such as Clinton and Schoolcraft received moderate C grades, the overall trend in Michigan reflects worsening air quality statewide, particularly in urban and industrial regions. Climate-driven wildfires, smoke, higher temperatures, and pollution from transportation and industry have contributed to increased ozone formation and particle pollution, posing ongoing health risks to residents across the state.

Detroit, MI

Detroit and the surrounding metro area ranked among the most polluted cities in the nation for both short-term and year-round particle pollution in the 2026 State of the Air report. The Detroit-Warren-Ann Arbor region reported 19 orange and 1 red ozone day, and 20 orange, 4 red, and 1 purple day for 24-hour particle pollution, indicating frequent and severe pollution spikes. Detroit also exceeded the EPA's annual PM_{2.5} standard with an average of 12.3 $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$.

The health impacts are especially concerning due to the region's large vulnerable population. Out of a total population of 5.43 million, over 1.1 million are children under 18, and nearly 1 million are over 65. The area has 727 children with asthma, 549,393 adults with asthma, and 374,481 people living with COPD, all of whom face greater health risks from particle pollution. Additionally, over 1.85 million residents are people of color, and 739,466 live in poverty, compounding the environmental health disparities in the region. This combination of persistent pollution and a high-risk population makes Detroit one of the hardest hit metro areas in the Midwest when it comes to air quality and public health.



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Disparities and Vulnerable Populations

Both Detroit and Milwaukee highlight the disproportionate impact of air pollution on communities of color, low-income populations, and individuals with preexisting health conditions. In both cities, the highest levels of pollution coincide with neighborhoods that are home to majority Black, Latino, Arab, and other marginalized populations. These communities face structural barriers such as underinvestment in healthcare, lack of green spaces, and proximity to industrial zones or major highways; all of which contribute to heightened exposure and fewer resources to manage the health consequences. The State of the Air 2026 report underscores how environmental injustice remains a public health crisis, with asthma, COPD, cardiovascular disease, and other pollution-related illnesses disproportionately affecting residents in these areas. Climate change further compounds these risks, as rising temperatures and wildfire smoke continue to drive increases in both ozone and particle pollution.

Conclusion

The 2026 State of the Air report makes it clear that air quality in Wisconsin is worsening and despite Michigan's overall improvement, ozone levels continued to be unhealthy in many cities. This is especially apparent in urban areas like Detroit and Milwaukee. Failing grades for ozone and short-term particle pollution reflect the growing impact of climate-driven wildfires, industrial emissions, and transportation-related pollution across the Midwest. These trends have serious health consequences, particularly for children, older adults, and communities of color who are already burdened by higher rates of chronic disease and poverty. Addressing these environmental health disparities will require stronger regulations, expanded monitoring, and community-driven solutions to protect vulnerable populations from the long-term effects of air pollution.



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HIGH OZONE DAYS 2022–2024

County	Orange	Red	Purple	Wgt. Avg.	Grade
Allegan	18	3	0	7.5	F
Bay	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC
Benzie	6	2	0	3.0	D
Berrien	16	1	0	5.8	F
Cass	12	0	0	4.0	F
Clinton	3	0	0	1.0	C
Genesee	8	1	0	3.2	D
Huron	6	0	0	2.0	C
Ingham	2	1	0	1.2	C
Kalamazoo	5	0	0	1.7	C
Kent	12	0	0	4.0	F
Lenawee	4	0	0	1.3	C
Macomb	13	0	0	4.3	F
Manistee	10	2	0	4.3	F
Marquette	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC
Mason	3	1	0	1.5	C
Missaukee	6	0	0	2.0	C
Muskegon	20	2	0	7.7	F
Oakland	10	1	0	3.8	F
Ottawa	7	2	0	3.3	F
St. Clair	11	0	0	3.7	F
Schoolcraft	3	0	0	1.0	C
Tuscola	6	1	0	2.5	D
Washtenaw	8	1	0	3.2	D
Wayne	19	1	0	6.8	F
Wexford	7	0	0	2.3	D

HIGH PARTICLE POLLUTION DAYS 2022–2024

24-Hour						Annual	
Orange	Red	Purple	Maroon	Wgt. Avg.	Grade	Design Value	Pass/Fail
0	0	0	0	0.0	A	INC	INC
3	3	0	0	2.5	D	7.7	Pass
DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC
DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC
DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC
DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC
4	3	0	0	2.8	D	7.9	Pass
DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC
5	4	0	0	3.7	F	8.3	Pass
5	2	1	0	3.3	F	10.0	Fail
4	2	1	0	3.0	D	8.4	Pass
3	2	0	0	2.0	C	8.2	Pass
2	4	0	0	2.7	D	8.2	Pass
0	0	0	0	0.0	A	INC	INC
INC	INC	INC	INC	INC	INC	INC	INC
DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC
0	1	1	0	1.2	C	7.6	Pass
DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC
1	1	0	0	0.8	B	INC	INC
3	2	1	0	2.7	D	INC	INC
5	4	0	0	3.7	F	8.1	Pass
0	0	0	0	0.0	A	INC	INC
DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC
3	1	2	0	2.8	D	8.6	Pass
20	4	1	0	9.3	F	12.3	Fail
DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC



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American Lung Association in Michigan

AT-RISK GROUPS

County	Total Population	Under 18	65 & Over	Lung Diseases				CV Disease	Pregnancies	Poverty	People of Color
				Pediatric Asthma	Adult Asthma	COPD	Lung Cancer				
Allegan	122,429	27,449	23,956	2,468	12,136	8,550	65	10,359	1,107	11,987	15,953
Bay	102,651	19,612	23,728	1,763	10,505	7,729	55	9,560	923	12,966	11,714
Benzie	18,520	3,078	5,560	277	1,914	1,570	10	2,019	141	1,765	1,319
Berrien	152,703	31,702	34,289	2,850	15,315	11,212	81	13,848	1,377	20,324	39,525
Cass	51,550	10,104	12,264	908	5,236	3,965	27	4,932	435	6,256	7,557
Clinton	80,050	16,556	16,085	1,488	8,110	5,720	43	6,936	756	5,502	9,684
Genesee	402,279	87,683	79,475	7,883	40,167	28,129	213	34,085	3,872	70,895	116,981
Huron	30,780	5,731	8,759	515	3,116	2,534	16	3,242	226	4,377	1,875
Ingham	290,427	55,920	44,476	5,027	30,234	17,615	154	20,261	3,590	42,961	95,702
Kalamazoo	264,780	55,104	44,358	4,954	26,923	16,653	141	19,543	3,027	33,110	65,806
Kent	673,002	154,861	105,991	13,922	66,793	41,757	357	48,798	7,261	68,064	195,371
Lenawee	97,746	19,637	21,057	1,765	9,925	7,124	52	8,726	867	9,887	14,227
Macomb	886,175	179,635	170,220	16,150	90,538	62,529	470	75,194	8,631	91,776	232,178
Manistee	25,519	4,153	7,445	373	2,654	2,127	14	2,722	181	3,434	2,992
Marquette	67,979	11,582	14,235	1,041	7,161	4,740	36	5,735	734	8,960	5,878
Mason	29,093	5,439	7,991	489	2,948	2,335	15	2,971	237	4,204	2,888
Missaukee	15,239	3,307	3,528	297	1,506	1,131	8	1,406	124	1,741	1,085
Muskegon	177,428	38,759	34,414	3,485	17,709	12,200	94	14,736	1,677	24,094	43,247
Oakland	1,296,888	256,732	250,499	23,081	133,235	91,621	689	110,156	12,665	103,791	405,158
Ottawa	306,235	68,100	53,992	6,122	30,512	19,782	163	23,515	3,218	26,507	53,965
St. Clair	160,308	31,624	34,740	2,843	16,389	12,034	85	14,747	1,394	18,488	15,697
Schoolcraft	8,178	1,407	2,517	126	838	710	4	918	56	1,162	1,307
Tuscola	52,757	10,333	12,153	929	5,374	4,015	28	4,968	444	7,469	4,021
Washtenaw	373,875	66,708	62,539	5,997	39,504	23,944	199	27,905	4,382	50,467	121,203
Wayne	1,771,063	412,900	308,605	37,120	174,438	116,206	939	138,345	17,976	357,796	909,387
Wexford	34,460	7,667	7,510	689	3,394	2,470	18	3,045	303	4,520	2,495



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HIGH OZONE DAYS 2022–2024

County	Orange	Red	Purple	Wgt. Avg.	Grade
Ashland	0	0	0	0.0	A
Brown	8	0	0	2.7	D
Columbia	16	2	0	6.3	F
Dane	17	1	0	6.2	F
Dodge	15	0	0	5.0	F
Door	13	1	0	4.8	F
Eau Claire	8	0	0	2.7	D
Fond du Lac	5	0	0	1.7	C
Forest	4	0	0	1.3	C
Grant	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC
Jackson	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC
Jefferson	15	0	0	5.0	F
Kenosha	34	4	0	13.3	F
Kewaunee	10	3	0	4.8	F
La Crosse	6	1	0	2.5	D
Manitowoc	12	3	0	5.5	F
Marathon	8	1	0	3.2	D
Milwaukee	22	2	0	8.3	F
Monroe	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC
Outagamie	8	0	0	2.7	D
Ozaukee	23	4	1	10.3	F
Racine	26	4	0	10.7	F
Rock	22	2	0	8.3	F
Sauk	13	2	0	5.3	F
Sheboygan	26	4	1	11.3	F
Taylor	5	0	0	1.7	C
Vilas	6	0	0	2.0	C
Walworth	20	0	0	6.7	F
Waukesha	19	0	0	6.3	F

HIGH PARTICLE POLLUTION DAYS 2022–2024

24-Hour						Annual	
Orange	Red	Purple	Maroon	Wgt. Avg.	Grade	Design Value	Pass/Fail
5	0	0	0	1.7	C	5.1	Pass
4	5	0	0	3.8	F	7.3	Pass
DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC
6	1	3	0	4.5	F	8.3	Pass
4	2	2	0	3.7	F	7.1	Pass
DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC
7	4	0	0	4.3	F	7.3	Pass
DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC
5	4	0	0	3.7	F	5.7	Pass
4	2	1	0	3.0	D	8.2	Pass
5	2	0	0	2.7	D	INC	INC
DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC
1	2	1	0	2.0	C	7.1	Pass
DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC
INC	INC	INC	INC	INC	INC	INC	INC
DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC
INC	INC	INC	INC	INC	INC	INC	INC
6	1	2	0	3.8	F	8.4	Pass
4	2	0	0	2.3	D	INC	INC
4	5	0	0	3.8	F	7.4	Pass
3	2	1	0	2.7	D	INC	INC
DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC
DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC
5	2	1	0	3.3	F	7.0	Pass
DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC
INC	INC	INC	INC	INC	INC	INC	INC
INC	INC	INC	INC	INC	INC	INC	INC
DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC	DNC
5	1	2	0	3.5	F	8.1	Pass



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AT-RISK GROUPS

County	Total Population	Under 18	65 & Over	Lung Diseases				CV Disease	Pregnancies	Poverty	People of Color
				Pediatric Asthma	Adult Asthma	COPD	Lung Cancer				
Ashland	16,196	3,304	3,708	205	1,456	923	8	1,347	146	2,185	2,919
Brown	273,909	61,008	47,490	3,785	24,364	13,789	143	19,319	2,824	25,827	61,496
Columbia	58,113	11,562	12,150	717	5,289	3,277	30	4,698	529	4,496	5,383
Dane	588,347	111,967	92,821	6,947	54,788	28,111	307	38,619	7,105	56,180	142,843
Dodge	88,635	16,620	17,897	1,031	8,202	4,961	46	7,060	762	7,118	11,073
Door	30,512	4,629	10,435	287	2,856	2,161	16	3,326	217	2,654	2,427
Eau Claire	108,830	20,875	19,458	1,295	10,062	5,396	57	7,570	1,268	11,136	12,873
Fond du Lac	104,269	21,491	21,821	1,333	9,398	5,753	54	8,272	1,006	9,301	14,469
Forest	9,506	1,810	2,518	112	863	598	5	888	71	1,452	1,896
Grant	52,330	10,871	10,100	674	4,723	2,678	27	3,814	502	6,609	3,345
Jackson	21,027	4,379	4,560	272	1,886	1,185	11	1,713	164	2,479	3,017
Jefferson	86,245	16,292	17,061	1,011	7,974	4,743	45	6,734	863	7,607	10,872
Kenosha	168,754	35,378	28,821	2,195	15,289	8,690	88	12,105	1,754	18,389	47,056
Kewaunee	20,751	4,232	4,868	263	1,864	1,217	11	1,779	175	1,785	1,558
La Crosse	121,060	22,646	23,130	1,405	11,229	6,240	63	8,836	1,387	14,068	14,787
Manitowoc	81,513	15,970	19,368	991	7,395	4,828	43	7,062	698	7,436	10,321
Marathon	139,091	30,710	28,126	1,905	12,315	7,521	73	10,783	1,278	13,122	18,971
Milwaukee	924,740	214,777	142,694	13,326	81,573	43,116	482	59,493	10,639	153,720	481,988
Monroe	46,370	11,717	8,830	727	3,941	2,393	24	3,420	413	5,848	5,338
Outagamie	195,390	43,783	34,527	2,717	17,335	9,953	102	13,986	1,938	11,991	29,473
Ozaukee	93,956	19,292	21,509	1,197	8,435	5,401	49	7,873	841	4,403	9,988
Racine	198,651	44,280	37,818	2,747	17,593	10,486	104	14,898	1,895	20,528	62,335
Rock	165,461	36,048	31,182	2,237	14,760	8,717	86	12,354	1,623	18,138	32,835
Sauk	66,486	14,596	13,982	906	5,884	3,640	35	5,251	611	6,097	7,940
Sheboygan	118,331	24,754	24,675	1,536	10,624	6,515	62	9,367	1,085	10,197	22,940
Taylor	20,167	4,608	4,608	286	1,755	1,159	11	1,694	163	2,254	1,195
Vilas	23,948	3,784	8,015	235	2,228	1,714	13	2,623	148	2,941	3,319
Walworth	106,029	19,782	22,857	1,227	9,787	5,958	55	8,580	1,025	10,790	17,231
Waukesha	417,029	85,031	90,974	5,276	37,619	23,679	217	34,228	3,829	22,694	60,804